

Horrid Murder! At an early hour on Wednesday morning last, the inhabitants of this town were alarmed with the dreadful information that Capt. James Purrington, of this place in cool blood had murdered his wife, six children and himself ... Augusta, (Kennebec) July 11, 1806.

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Horrid Murder!

AUGUSTA, (Kennebe) JULY 1, 1806.

At an early hour on Wednesday morning last, the inhabitants of this town were alarmed with the dreadful information, that Capt. James Purrinton, of this place, in cool blood, had murdered his wife, six children, and himself.—His oldest son, with a slight wound, escaped, and his second daughter was found desperately wounded, and probably supposed dead by the father.—Between the hours of 2 and 3, a near neighbor, Mr. Dean Wyman, was awakened by the lad who escaped, with an incoherent account of the horrid scene from which he had just fled; he, with a Mr. Ballard, another neighbor, instantly repaired to the fatal spot, and here, after having lighted a candle, a scene was presented which beggars all description.—In the outer room lay prostrate on his face, and weltering in his gore, the perpetrator of the dreadful deed—his throat cut in the most shocking manner, and the bloody razor lying on a table by his side—In an adjoining bed-room lay Mrs. Purrinton in her bed, her head almost severed from her body; and near her on the floor, a little daughter about ten years old, who probably hearing the cries of her mother, ran to her relief from the apartment in which she slept, and was murdered by her side—In another apartment was found the two oldest and the youngest daughters, the first, aged 19, dreadfully butchered; the second desperately wounded, reclining her head on the body of the dead infant 18 months old, and in a state of horror and almost total insensibility—In the room with the father, lay in bed with their throats cut, the two youngest sons, the one 8, the other 6 years old—And in another room was found on the hearth, most dreadfully mangled, the second son, aged 12; he had fallen with his trowsers under one arm, with which he had attempted to escape—On the breastwork over the fire-place, was the distinct impression of a bloody hand, where the unhappy victim probably supported himself before he fell. The whole house seemed covered with blood, and near the body of the murderer lay the deadly axe. From the surviving daughter we have no account of this transaction; her dangerous situation prevents any communication, and but faint expectations are entertained of her recovery—From the son, aged 17, we learn the following.—That he was awakened by the piercing cries of his mother, and involuntarily shrieking himself, he leapt from his bed and ran towards the door of his apartment; he was met by his father with an axe in his hand (the moon shone bright) who struck him, but being

so near each other, the axe passed over his shoulder and one corner of it entered his back, making a slight wound; his father then struck at him once or twice and missed him; at this moment his younger brother, who slept in the same bed with him, jump'd from it and attempted to get out at the door; to prevent this the father attacked him, which gave the eldest an opportunity to escape. During this dreadful conflict, not a word was uttered. From the appearance of the wounds generally, it seems to have been the design of Purrinton to dissever the heads from the bodies, excepting the two youngest, whose throats it is supposed were cut with a razor.—The oldest daughter and second son had several wounds, the probable consequence of their resistance. We have no evidence to lead us satisfactorily to the motives for this barbarous and unnatural deed. Capt. Purrinton was 46 years of age, and had lately removed from Bowdoinham to this town—an independent farmer, with a handsome estate, of steady, correct, and industrious habits, and of a good character and fair reputation, and strongly attached to his family. He had been heard lately to say, that he felt much distressed at the unpromising appearance of his farm; that he should be destitute of bread for his family, and hay for his cattle, and dreaded the consequences. The Sunday before his death, it is said, he wrote to his brother, and informed him that on the reception of the letter he should be dead, and requesting him to take charge of his family. In the letter was a death's head marked out, and it was sealed with black.—It was found on Monday by his wife, and gave her the greatest alarm and uneasiness—This her husband perceiving, and learning the cause, he attempted to console her by assurances that he had no intention of committing suicide, but that he had a presentiment of his approaching death. Capt. Purrinton was a warm believer in the doctrine of universal salvation, though it is not said of him, that he was a bigoted maniac or a religious enthusiast. His whole conduct the day preceding and during the last and bloody scene of his life, seems marked with the utmost coolness and deliberation. Towards the close of that day he ground the fatal axe, and when the family retired to bed, he was left reading the bible. The jury of inquest have brought him in guilty of wilful murder on his wife and six children, and that as a felon he did kill and murder himself—We do not recollect that the annals of Massachusetts can furnish a transaction so distressing.

The ways of Providence are dark and mysterious! yet God is just! and man, weak man, must tremble and adore!

After the Coroner's Inquest had executed its office, the Selectmen took charge of the dead—Their remains in eight coffins were conveyed to the Meeting-house.

Mrs. Purrinton and her children were placed in the body of the house; Capt. Purrinton in the porch.

Their funeral took place yesterday afternoon, attended by an immense concourse of people.

The public services at the Meeting-house were solemn and pertinent—commenced by a Funeral Anthem—Prayer by Rev. Mr. Stone—Sermon by Rev. Mr. Taylor—a Prayer by Rev. Mr. Merritt.

The bodies of Mrs. Purrinton and her children were interred in the common burying ground; Capt. Purrinton in the high-way adjoining the same, and the deadly axe and razor buried with him.

They were attended to their graves by a numerous and respectable procession, which was arranged by John Davis, Reuel Williams and H. W. Fuller, Esqrs. appointed and acting as Marshals on the occasion.

The procession moved over the bridge and through the principal streets, to the place of interment, in the order following.

Senior Marshal.

The Coroner, and

Inquest,

Rev. Mr. Haskell, Rev. Mr. Stone.

The Corpse of Mrs. Purrinton,

And her six children, according to their ages, supported by bearers attended by pall-holders, followed by

The surviving Son.

Other relations.

Selectmen.

Clergy.

Sheriff of the County.

Judges of Courts.

Military officers.

Magistrates.

Citizens.

Marshals.

A cart bearing the body of Capt. Purrinton, closed the procession.

The Church service was performed at the grave over the bodies of Mrs. Purrinton and children by the Rev. Mr. Haskell, in a very solemn and impressive manner—The procession then returned to the Meeting-house, where the solemnities of the day were closed by another and an appropriate prayer by the Rev. Mr. Gillet.

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